

California Democrats try to quell recall

POLITICS: Their letter says the effort wastes needed money and distracts from getting a budget passed.

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By **CLAIRE VITUCCI**
WASHINGTON BUREAU

WASHINGTON - California Democrats said Friday that they will do whatever is necessary to slow momentum of the recall effort, saying the attempt to oust Gov. Davis wastes taxpayer money and takes needed attention away from solving the state budget crisis.

Just before leaving the nation's capital for the July 4 recess, House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi; Reps. Sam Farr, D-Carmel; Mike Honda, D-San Jose; Lois Capps, D-Santa Barbara; Zoe Lofgren, D-San Jose and Brad Sherman, D-Sherman Oaks, urged Californians not to sign recall petitions.

"It is an attempt to disrupt our state," Pelosi, D-San Francisco, said. "This effort is purely political and does a grave disservice to the people of California."

Proponents have until Sept. 2 to collect nearly 900,000 signatures to qualify the recall effort for a future ballot, but supporters want them in much sooner. Getting the signatures certified in July or August would ensure that the recall measure be the subject of a fall special election.

A fall election is thought to be more favorable for Republicans who historically vote in higher numbers than Democrats in special elections.

So far, recall proponents have submitted 376,008 petition signatures, more than a third of those needed to put the measure before voters.

Vista Republican Rep. Darrell Issa has contributed more than \$1 million to the signature-gathering effort and has announced his candidacy for governor should the recall qualify.

He could not be reached Friday for comment. But in a recent interview, he reaffirmed his effort to recall the governor.

"I think what I'm doing is the right thing," Issa said.

The lawmakers released a letter to state residents Friday signed by all 33 Democratic House members from California, including Rep. Joe Baca, the Inland area's only Democrat in the House.

Baca was not at Friday's news conference. In a recent interview, he said that the money needed to fund a recall election would be better spent on education and transportation.

"The state is strapped," said Baca of Rialto. A recall election "is a waste of taxpayers' money and puts us in further deficit.

The Democrats also said Davis has become an unfair scapegoat for the state's energy crisis, languishing economy and budget woes. They said they stand behind the governor.

Asked whether Democrats would support a Democratic candidate being added to the ballot if the recall qualifies, Pelosi

said: "We'll cross that bridge when we come to it."

Democrats hope the more the public knows about opposition to the recall, the fewer signatures recall supporters will be able to get in time for a fall election, Pelosi said. If Democrats could hold off a recall until the March primary, Davis has a greater shot of beating it, Pelosi said.

Democrats are likely to come out to the polls in March because they will also be picking their nominee for president.

Reach Claire Vitucci at (202) 661-8422 or cvitucci@pe.com

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